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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE — Radio Service — OFFICE OF INFORMATION

HOMEMAKERS' CHAT FRIDAY, November 24, 1939.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "MANY USES FOR A DRY CELLAR." Information from the Bureau of Agricultural Chemistry and Engineering.

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It's good news for the Younger Generation-whether of the 'teen age or in the primary school- when Dad and Mother decide that something should be done about the basement. If the cellar is a large, light, undivided, dry, clean, reasonably warm area extending under the whole house, maybe it's possible to divide the floor space for different purposes. Perhaps the furnace can be partitioned off with the coal bin. There could be a food storage room separated and insulated from the warm part of the cellar, for fruits and vegetables and canned supplies, also preserves, jellies, and pickles. In rural homes the storeroom doubtless has a place for crocks of eggs put down in waterglass or waiting to go to market, also for kegs of sauer-kraut and brine pickles, even corned beef.

Maybe you still have a lot of floor space available for a laundry, a sleeping room for a hired helper, or for one of the boys in the family who may care more for a place of his own than for dressy appearances. What interests the Younger Generation most about the cellar, however, is the possibility of having a game or recreation room down there, such as found in many of the newer city homes. If all the utilitarian requirements in the basement are planned to take up a minimum of space then that much more is left for the recreation room. Perhaps it may be made as large as the living-room, or larger. In houses that have recreation rooms planned from the start, the area directly beneath the living-room is often used so as to take advantage of the existing chimney and have a basement fireplace. Keep that in mind when remodeling the cellar--however it is not necessary.

But-- and it's a very important but--- engineers of the Bureau of Agricultural Chemistry and Engineering point out that the basement must be dry for these uses--especially sleeping and recreation. If there's no dampness the cellar is a safe place to sleep and is preferred by some because it is more likely to be uniform in temperature, quieter, and less drafty than the upper stories.

For the same reasons, and a number of others, the basement is suitable for recreation purposes. If the children are young, it makes a fine substitute for the yard in bad weather-a place where they can store and use bulky toys like electric trains and tracks, doll houses, building blocks, tools, and so on. This keeps the clutter out of upper rooms, and tones down normal noises of children playing. The children can bring playmates in and out by the cellar entrance, if there is one, avoiding the usual tracking up that is such a trial to a housekeeper.

Older children in the family can use a basement recreation room as a second living-room where they can entertain young friends without forcing their elders to give up customary comfort. Such games as table tennis, ninepins, pocket billiards, and Chinese checkers are well relegated to another part of the house than the living-room. And when not in use for amusement, the same recreation room is a find place for study if the lighting is adequate.

But if there is any feeling of dampness or clamminess in the basement, better go no further with the plans until that trouble is remedied. Existing cellars are hard to make dry when proper damp-proofing is not provided at the time of building, but there are a number of suggestions about fixing cellars in Farmers' Bulletin 1572-F, Making Cellars Dry. The first recommendation is to have a trench dug around the outside of the house next to the foundation wall. Have drain tiles put in this trench at the level of the bottom of the cellar walls, and while the trench is open, have a plaster or waterproofing coat applied to the walls. That is, if their condition warrants the expense. Some people also plaster the inside walls of

the cellar with cement mortar as an added precaution. As a decorative finish for the walls of the recreation room, cement washes are more durable than whitewash and kalsomines. Using the white portland cement gives a bright, pleasing appearance. If you want a color, you can mix coloring pigments with the cement. Put a trial coat on an inconspicuous spot to find out how much pigment you need to get the right shade. The floor could be coated with the same material. Directions for mixing and applying cement washes are given in Farmers' Bulletin 1772, "Use of Concrete on the Farm".

But before you do anything to change the cellar in other ways, make it dry. More ventilation may help, especially in the food storage room and in the game room. If it takes very drastic measures to get rid of cellar dampness, better consult an architect or builder.

But, assuming that the cellar is dry, you want to dress up the recreation room a little. Instead of using cement wash, you can paint the concrete floor, or cover it with linoleum. However, if the concrete was laid directly on the ground it may frequently be damp and you can't use linoleum or paint on it satisfactorily. But you can lay a wooden floor in a suitable plastic material or nail it to sleepers secured to the concrete.

Of course, the homemakers who are listening today are not likely to do such work as laying floors or digging drainage trenches. But if they are good executives and know what ought to be done to make the basement usable, they can direct the work. Sometimes it takes the inspiration and enthusiasm of a mother, to start the ball rolling, both figuratively speaking, and down in the recreation room.

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